

## BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

**The Accidental Library Marketer.** By Kathy Dempsey. Medford, N.J.: Information Today Inc., 2009. 312 pages (soft cover). ISBN-13: 978-1-57387-368-0. US\$29.50.

Written by Kathy Dempsey, a respected authority in the library community and long-time editor of *Marketing Library Services*, *The Accidental Library Marketer* is a concise step-by-step guide to library marketing. The principles of marketing and “best practices” are brought to bear on the efforts of librarians who—often “accidentally” and with no training—are tasked with promoting, publicizing, and advertising the services they provide. The book will be of interest to librarians, library managers, and other information professionals who find themselves involved in marketing.

Dempsey’s book is organized into 14 chapters and progresses more or less linearly through the important stages of library marketing. Each chapter discusses at least one crucial element in the marketing process, and successive chapters build on knowledge learned in the previous ones. While the book was written to be read from start to finish, building a cumulative understanding of the importance of a marketing strategy, many chapters and sections can, nevertheless, be read alone for practical guidance on aspects of marketing, for instance, designing a brochure or poster. Most chapters end with an excellent list of recommended reading should readers wish to learn more about a particular topic. Interspersed throughout the text are Web links to resources that help to explain many of the author’s examples. All these links are listed, together with supplementary information, on the book’s Web site ([www.librariesareessential.com](http://www.librariesareessential.com)). The appendices contain excellent articles from experts in the field on various aspects of marketing, such as improving media relations, designing promotional materials, and how promotion and marketing differ. The detailed index facilitates and expedites topic searches.

The author argues that while marketing and promotion should be paramount to any organization and an integral part of the strategic plan, to many libraries marketing and promotion may be only an afterthought. Dempsey explains what marketing is and why it is important in today’s libraries. A 10-stage cycle of “true marketing” is discussed, and definitions of several key marketing terms are provided. The difference between *promotion* and *marketing*—terms that many people use interchangeably—is explained and clarified. The discussion of word selection for use in marketing literature and how the right

word can be crucial to success is especially useful. The author recommends communicating in plain language and avoiding library lingo whenever possible.

Dempsey then examines areas of focus for assessing the current situation in one’s own library, including physical space, online environment, and print materials, and explores ways to elicit meaningful feedback through methods such as creating surveys and organizing focus groups. She also discusses the use of demographic and census data to identify the library’s “market.”

Methods for getting administration and management to “buy in” to your marketing plan include involving staff in plans early in the process, communicating objectives clearly and completely, and having real evidence to back up your plans. The real key to management buy-in, Dempsey emphasizes, is being as transparent as possible from the beginning. She also offers examples of ways in which librarians can present their ideas to management to acquire the funding they need. Guidelines for producing good promotional materials include basic design principles for print messages such as posters, notices, brochures, and newsletters.

One of the most useful sections in *The Accidental Library Marketer* is the discussion about the advantages of having a strong Web presence, that is, using your Web site as a marketing tool and making your Web site more useable. This is especially important in public or academic libraries that are known throughout the community and have a large number of users. The importance of making staff contact information easily accessible is also emphasized.

The final chapter is a collection of candid testimonials from librarians who have been successful in marketing library services in unconventional ways, many of which can be adapted to any library.

Dempsey clearly demonstrates her expertise in helping libraries to “get their message out.” With its real-life examples from library professionals and its wealth of practical ideas, *The Accidental Library Marketer* should find a place in every librarian’s bookshelf.

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